

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

By the *Office Action* of 28 April 2010, Claims 24-37 and 45-46 are pending in the Application, Claims 45-46 withdrawn, and Claims 24-37 rejected. Applicant thanks Examiner with appreciation for the careful consideration and examination given to the Application.

Applicant submits this *Response and Amendment After Final Rejection* solely to facilitate prosecution. As such, Applicant reserves the right to present new or additional claims in this Application that have similar or broader scope as originally filed. Applicant also reserves the right to present additional claims in a later-filed continuation application that have similar or broader scope as originally filed. Accordingly, any amendment, argument, or claim cancellation presented during prosecution is not to be construed as abandonment or disclaimer of subject matter.

Applicant submits this *Response and Amendment After Final Rejection* does not raise new matter issues or raise issues requiring further consideration or searches. Clarifications are made herein to Claim 31, yet they combine recitations from presently canceled Claims 34-36. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner reconsider the pending *Final Office Action* for the following reasons and remarks.

1. The Claim Rejections

The Examiner rejects Claims 24-29 and 30-35 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,843,365 to Baker. The ground of rejection is traversed, as Baker does *not* disclose that the “guidance is cancelled only when the sheet has reached the conveyance position” as recited in Claim 24. The guiding means of Baker are always present in the conveyance position.

The Examiner rejects Claim 36 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Baker in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,188,010 to Borchardt et al. The Examiner rejects Claim 37 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over to Baker in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,282,528 to Hudson.

Claim 24 relates to a method for transporting a sheet. The sheet is moved in a first direction by applying a first carrier, wherein a retainer area of the sheet is retained by the first carrier, and wherein a conveyance area of the sheet projects with respect to the first carrier.

Subsequently, the sheet is conveyed from the first carrier to a second carrier, wherein the sheet is put in a conveyance position by the first carrier, in which position the complete conveyance area overlaps the second carrier. Starting from that position, the sheet is moved in a second direction by applying the second carrier. At least a portion of the conveyance area of the sheet, which is denoted as guidance area of the sheet, is guided continuously during the movement of the sheet in the first direction through to the conveyance position, and the guidance is cancelled only when the sheet has reached the conveyance position.

Cancellation of the guidance of the guidance area of the sheet is necessary in order to allow the conveyance of the sheet from the first carrier to the second carrier to take place. If the guidance were not canceled, the guidance would be in the way, and block an initial contact between the sheet and the second carrier in the conveyance position. However, guidance of the guidance area of the sheet is important, as the sheet may be a relatively thin sheet, wherein edge portions of the sheet are apt to curl if no guidance would be applied for those edge portions, which may lead to the presence of useless areas in the final product.

A conveyance position is specifically recited in Claim 24. The guidance area of the sheet is guided until the point when the sheet reaches this conveyance position. In this way, it is achieved that an edge portion of the sheet projecting with respect to the first carrier is continuously guided, while other edge portions can be supported by the first carrier, so that curling of edge portions is prevented. Only when the sheet is in the conveyance position, and ready for conveyance from the first carrier to the second carrier, is the guidance cancelled, so that the conveyance area of the sheet, of which the guidance area is part, can contact the second carrier. At that point, curling is still prevented, as the function of the necessary guidance is immediately taken over by the second carrier.

Baker uses a different approach to this process, and has no cancellation of the guiding means in the conveyance position whatsoever. The annotated **Fig. 1** of Baker as provided by the Examiner illustrates correct indications of the sheet, the carriers, the conveyance area of the sheet, the guiding means and the conveyance position. However, the guiding means are *always* present in the conveyance position, wherein there is no way that the guidance is cancelled at some point. As a result, the guiding means are in the way in the conveyance position, and hinder direct contact between the conveyance area of the sheet and the second carrier and that position.

When the sheet moves away from the conveyance position, the conveyance area is moved beyond the guiding means, and has to cross an open space between the guiding means and a frame member **18**, and has to cross the frame member as mentioned, before the conveyance area finally reaches the second carrier. In that time, curling can take place at the position of the conveyance area due to lack of contact to any means for guiding at least a portion of the conveyance area.

It is respectfully submitted that Claim 24 is novel over Baker, and thus Claim 24 and those Claims ultimately dependent therefrom are in a condition of allowance.

Claim 31 is herein amended with the subject matter of Claims 34-36, now canceled, and is novel and non-obvious in view of the cited art. The Examiner rejects Claim 31 (previously Claim 36) in view of the combination of Baker and Borchardt et al. It is noted that a dimension in a transverse direction is normally denoted as the width, and the Examiner suggests that Baker discloses the variations in width as recited by Claim 31. This is respectfully traversed, as it cannot be seen where variations in the width of the left-most belt **15** of Baker is shown.

It may be so that it is known to make belts with tolerances in the width dimensions of such belts, but this is inapposite for rejection of Claim 31. Claim 31 specifically recites two types of areas, which are different as far as their width dimensions are concerned.

This feature is clearly supported by the figures of the present application, and not disclosed in the cited prior art. Discerning types of areas in a belt has nothing to do with the normal phenomenon of width tolerance, but has to do with dimensions on a higher level, i.e. defined dimensions for each of the types. Hence, knowledge of width tolerances would not lead to the insight that it is possible to make two types of areas in the belt. It is further remote to suggest that one of skill in the art would realize the desired cancellation of the guidance on the basis of a difference of the width of the areas.

It is respectfully submitted that Claim 31 is non-obvious over the combination of Baker and Borchardt et al. The prior art does not teach the presence of two types of width areas in a belt for guiding a portion of a sheet, let alone the associated possibility of realizing a cancellation of guidance of the sheet portion and an immediate conveyance from one carrier to another, in order for the sheet portion to always be retained so that there is no risk of curling of the sheet portion.

Regarding Claim 29, the Examiner returns to Baker, with citation to different elements than used in rejection of Claim 24. According to the claimed invention, cancellation of the guidance of the guidance area of the sheet in the conveyance position can be achieved by having guiding means in the form of a conveyor belt having two areas as explained in the foregoing. The cancellation of the guidance takes place when contact to the relatively wide area is changed to contact to the relatively small area, which can be realized on the basis of a speed difference of the guiding means and the first carrier.

Claim 29 recites that the cancellation of the guidance of the guidance area of the sheet takes place by realizing a speed difference of the guiding means and the first carrier. Baker does not disclose this speed difference. On the contrary, Baker discloses that in narrow belt conveyors, which are the subject of Baker, proper tensioning of the belts is needed to make sure that each of the belts are driven at the same speed (paragraph 0005). Baker discloses measures for realizing the proper tensioning, and there is no teaching of a speed difference whatsoever. As has been mentioned in the foregoing, the belt that is denoted as the guiding means by the Examiner is always present in the conveyance position, and has a constant width, so that it is not possible to achieve a cancellation of the guiding function of the belt in the conveyance position.

Independent Claims 24 and 31 are novel and non-obvious over the cited art, and thus it is respectfully submitted that all other pending Claims (ultimately dependent upon one of Claims 24 and 31) are also novel and non-obvious over the cited art.

2. Fees

This *Response and Amendment After Final Rejection* is being filed within six months of the *Office Action*, and more specifically within two months. Thus, no extension fees are believed due.

No additional claims fees are believed due, as the pending claim count as to both total number of claims, and independent claims, remains covered under the original filing fee.

Nonetheless, authorization is hereby expressly given to charge any further fees due via deposit account No. 20-1507.

CONCLUSION

By the present *Response and Amendment After Final Rejection*, this Application has been placed in full condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests early and favorable action. Should the Examiner have any further questions or reservations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned Attorney at 404.885.2773.

Respectfully submitted,

Certificate of Transmission:

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being submitted by e-filing to the US Patent and Trademark Office in accordance with §1.8 on this date, via the EFS-Web electronic filing system.

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